

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, March 14, 2005**

Council Members in Attendance: Fr. Bill Wagner, Ray Neltner, Ralph Bedel, Michelle Stultz, Vic Ivers, Duane Bradley, and Janet Tate.

Council Members Absent: Matt Malott.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett and Dee Archer. Special guest was Rob Muehlenkamp, a Pre-Theology student at Mt. St. Mary's Seminary.

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM EST by Ray Neltner. Fr. Bill opened the meeting with a prayer.

Reports were not filed in advance of this meeting. Two report exceptions were made.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting: The last meeting was held on Monday, February 14th. Ray Neltner asked if there were any questions regarding the minutes. Mike Gennett stated there was no feedback. Ray made a motion that the minutes be accepted as written. Vic Ivers made the motion and Janet Tate seconded it. The minutes were approved.

Business Manager Report: Mike Gennett gave the report.

The Archbishop's Fund Drive appears to be falling short at this time. Through today, we had 54% of our goal of \$26,327 in. Only 170 households have responded so far or 11.4%.

A few comments were made regarding the budget for this fiscal year. Overall, we are doing very well. Thru March 15th, the Sunday collections are up over \$52,000 and school revenue is up \$47,500 over last year.

Coupled with expenses being down in the parish by \$68,714 and with school expenses running below plan, our net income is \$46,832 better than last year. Fr. Bill pointed out that our bills are all being paid every week. We are doing better than most parishes these days.

On the other side, our debt remains an issue. Our debt is growing at the rate of \$80,000 a year in additional interest. We are only in a position to pay \$50,000 a year on the principal which means that the total net balance is growing by \$30,000 a year.

At this point Fr. Bill stated that a group has come forward that wishes to bring Bingo back to the parish. He stated we have no choice but to do this because we can not continue to allow our debt to grow. Future building needs will have to be addressed someday and the debt can not be in the way.

Report Exceptions – There were two report exceptions made.

The first was a request by Becky Ready for assistance from One & Done for the Easter Vigil. Ray said he would contact Leslie Molitor to see who was available. These sort of requests need to be made at the Parish Office.

Fr. Bill stated this is the year to volunteer for the Easter Vigil because it is an early start time due to the early Easter and no Daylight Savings Time.

The second request was for organizing the Ministry Fair on May 15th. Ray asked if anyone was willing to volunteer to handle the Ministry Fair. No initial response was made, but Vic Ivers said he might be able to assist after checking with his wife. At this time, the issue remained open.

Pastor's Report – Fr. Bill gave his report.

The Parish Yearbook will be in progress in May. Pictures will be taken in the Library. Fr. Bill is eager to get this done and the Pastors he has spoken with that have used Lifetouch have all been pleased. Fr. Bill would be meeting with Ralph Bedel after the meeting tonight to discuss the project.

Michelle Stultz wanted to know if family portraits would be available. Fr. Bill responded that the companies make a lot of their money by selling the photos. Many people have their church family portrait in their homes as their official family portrait.

If anyone comes into contact with a Fr. Larry Yanch, he is passing himself off as a priest. He is not.

Health care costs continue to rise and are a major expenditure for the parish to cover our employees.

Fr. Bill also reported there is no progress in Clermont County regarding the Futures Project. No one wants to go with St. Bernadette and St. Bernadette does not want to be with us. There is another meeting this coming Monday night and Fr. Bill will be making a new proposal.

Some of the staff has experienced deaths in their families recently. Margaret Osinski's Father died last week, Peg Fischer's Mother in Law this past Saturday, and Mike Gennett's sister in law in February.

Pastor's Findings on Parish Councils – Fr. Bill gave his report on what he learned when he called other parishes on how their Parish Councils are structured.

Ascension in Kettering uses the discernment method. They ask for nominations. The nominees go to three meetings covering the description of the parish, each candidate describing their gifts, and the third is a prayer meeting in the chapel. Leadership Ascension meets with all the leaders and teaches leadership. Council meets every month except July.

St. Frances de Sales in Lebanon has names submitted and they are contacted. The names are put in a hat and those chosen are pulled on Pentecost Sunday.

At *St. Mary's Hyde Park*, once a year there is a talk at Mass. Prayers are made to the Holy Spirit. Names are submitted. Sometimes they get as many as 100-125 names. 60 or so come to a meeting. Candidates get up and speak. Two questions are given as homework: (1) what do I hope for

the parish? And (2) how do I achieve it? The Pastor and Council eventually choose the members.

At, *St. Vincent Ferrer*, IPAD Consulting came in and they are still sorting through all the information that has been presented.

Our Lady of Visitation in Mack breaks out Council members by geographical regions. They call and welcome new parishioners in their region.

Sacred Heart in Fairfield is struggling to see the bigger picture. They like to micro manage.

Our Lady of Rosary in Greenhills has the staff report to a commission on the Council. Council provides reviews and offers feedback.

St. Gertrude in Madeira requests nominations on Information Night. Letter is submitted. No elections are held. Members are selected. One point of interest: Finance does the budgets, but Council makes the cuts when needed.

St. Columbian in Loveland meets 10 times a year except in December and the month Easter falls.

The bottom line is the overall trend is going to the discernment method instead of holding elections.

Ralph Bedel wanted to know how many Council members were scheduled to leave at the end of this year. Ray Neltner said four, but there have been tentative discussions about some staying on.

Fr. Bill pointed out that the Finance Committee is selected based upon special skills regarding understanding finances and the ability to look at the big picture. He foresees no change in this process. Finance's role is to advise on the budget and manage our resources.

Ray Neltner than proceeded to ask every Council member their viewpoints based upon Fr. Bill's report and the council structure documents that have been previously handed out.

Vic Ivers said that discernment is the best of both worlds. Fr. Bill responded it is gaining popularity.

Ray Neltner said the May 15th Ministry Fair could be used as Information Meetings.

Duane Bradley said Council needs to have one vision looking at the whole parish. Look at the broader scope. Council needs to do a better job of representing the whole parish.

Michelle Stultz likes rules. She is a doer. She likes fellowship commission, welcoming, and analyzing data. The planner part is too broad. She particularly likes the accountability part.

Ray Neltner said the larger pastoral plan has some nice ideas on orienting members.

Fr. Bill stated that many councils are struggling like we are. We can not over look our spiritual dimension. "The decisions must flow from God or we would just be another corporate management board." Council must work on the pastoral mission of the church.

Vic Ivers sees this as a three year issue. Our Parish is changing from a rural to a major suburban parish.

The meeting then focused on the findings of each Council member from their phone calls to parishioners as to what their thoughts were about the parish.

Positive statements are noted by a (+) and negative states as a (-).

Janet Tate said she spoke to the Seniors group:

- (+) Music at the 10 AM Sunday Mass
- (+) Children's Liturgy of the Word
- (+) Recent senior day of Reconciliation
- (-) Dress of young girls is inappropriate especially as Eucharist Ministers
- (-) People leaving Mass early
- (-) Kiss of Peace taking place during cold and flu season
- (-) Use of the Communion cup during cold and flu season
- (-) Kiss of Peace handshakes are too rough
- (-) Miss the use of the organ

Vic Ivers learned the following:

- (+) New warmth including the greeters, the One & Done Program, more involvement & welcoming, the new music although some songs are inappropriate
- (+) CCD program, especially the moving around of the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades
- (+) The Nursery
- (+) The Youth Minister & the Youth Ministry
- (+) CRHP
- (+) The Spiritual Side
- (+) More young people in the ministry
- (-) More use of Bibles needed in CCD
- (-) More spiritual teachings needed at Mass
- (+/-) The School is a "mixed bag"

Michelle Stultz stated:

- (+) Got wonderful ideas for JulyFest
- (+) The Music
- (+) The new Music Director
- (+) The parish web site - people like it - tons of information available - needs to be promoted - force bulletin information to the web site to promote more use

- (+) Fr. Bill is approachable – most approachable Pastor in a long time
- (+) Greeters
- (-) Presider schedule not listed – people want to know when Fr. Bill has Sunday Mass
- (-) Printing Sunday envelopes are an expense that are not needed for those who pay by credit card or ach
- (-) Need to sell the school more

Duane Bradley learned:

- (+) Friendly & welcome
- (+) positive about the parish
- (-) one household he called said they do not belong and want to be removed from the Guidebook
- (-) one person stated they have tried to get involved as a Lector, Eucharistic Minister and have not received a response to the request
- (-) the same person stated they asked to be on the prayer list and it was not done (no time frame was noted when the request was made)
- (-) the same person further stated even though they have been sick no one has come to visit
- (-) the staff is not friendly and does not return phone calls

Duane also mentioned during the course of his calls that a parishioner who works for Sam's mentioned that grant money is available to churches. Mike Gennett stated that Sam's had called on February 4 regarding this program. A detailed email was sent to the Fund Raising Committee to review the project. Mike's understanding is the Fund Raising Committee plans to meet soon to discuss this and other programs.

Ray Neltner reported Matt Malott's findings:

- (+) the new Music program
- (+) the Greeters
- (-) School Issues
- (-) The Boosters

Ray Neltner stated:

(+) The new music

(-) Too many new songs. Participation is dropping

Fr. Bill stated he saw one overall trend and it is all tied to Sunday Mass. He also said the issue of spirituality is here, but the sense of community is missing. Some homilies would be directed at this in the future.

Duane Bradley said he sees a lot of positive trends: the music, the greeters, the One & Done Program, the Youth Ministry, CRHP, and the Web Site.

While each Council member made their report, Ray Neltner made the following recap on the white board:

(+)	(-)
Music	Young girls dress
Children's Liturgy	Leaving church early
Greeters	Sign of Peace/ cup-cold & flu season
One & Done Program	Bone crushing handshake
PSR Rotation	Miss the organ
Nursery	Too many new songs
Youth Ministry	Music not aligned with liturgy
CRHP	More Bibles in PSR
Generally happy	Mundane & routine
Young people involved	More spiritual teachings
Website - needs to be promoted	Publish presider schedule
Friendly, welcoming	Why issue envelopes for electronic givers?
	Barriers to involvement
	Calls not returned

After the recap, there was a discussion about the next steps. Fr. Bill stated after a while at St. Andrews, council was reluctant to do the calls week after week.

Mike Gennett stated maybe a parish email address can be set up for parishioners to write to council members. Everyone agreed this was a good idea. This will be published in the bulletin and on the web site very soon! The email address is stmCouncil@sttm.org

It was decided to do the calls again for the next meeting.

The discernment process would begin. Vic Ivers asked Mike Gennett for the email addresses of each organization head so he can contact them for nominees.

Fr. Bill stated that he felt our Council was “mid-way” when compared to other councils.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM. Fr. Bill led the group in a prayer.

Next meeting is Monday, April 11, 7:00 PM.

No reports follow – next reports due for May 9, 2005, meeting.